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ROMANTIC ELEMENTS IN TEGNÉR'S RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

I

Introduction

It is well known that Esaias Tegnér, altho bishop of the Swedish Lutheran Church, did not entertain strictly orthodox views as to religion. In two previous articles¹ the writer has treated the question of Tegnér's religious orthodoxy in its bearing upon his poetry and literary career. Tegnér's views upon religion, however, receive a more concrete, if not so exalted, expression in his official sermons (*kyrkliga tal*) connected with his duties as bishop of the Lutheran Church. These formal expressions of faith on the part of the Lutheran bishop bear a most important relation to the religious ideals of the Romantic poet and it is chiefly with a view towards clarifying this relation that the following investigation has been undertaken.

In his *kyrkliga tal* Bishop Tegnér presented an extremely liberal and modern view of religion, which he endeavored to harmonize with the traditional orthodox view by interpreting the cardinal dogmas of the Lutheran Church as mere symbols of religious truth common to all Christianity. Thus Tegnér avoided a strictly heretical attitude towards the Lutheran Church, in that he accepted the orthodox dogmas insofar as they symbolize the truth and rejected them only insofar as they are to be regarded as the truth in itself (*tecknet är ej saken*).

We see in every one of his sermons a conscious effort to avoid speculation and to arrive at the purely religious significance of Christian theology. That he here adopted a hostile attitude towards theology is not at all surprising when we remember that even before accepting the office of bishop in 1824, he had

¹ "Försoningen in Tegnér's Frithiofssaga," *G.E.G.Ph.*, X, pp. 557-571, 1911; and "Pessimism in Tegnér's Poetry," *Pub. of the Soc. for the Advancement of Scan. Study*, III, pp. 112-133, 1916.

in unequivocal terms declared² himself as the sworn enemy of theology (cf. *Pessimism in Tegnér's Poetry*, p. 125 ff.). But theology, however hostile it may be to the progress of religion, was to Tegnér a mere form and could, therefore, be retained by every good Christian provided he apprehend the substance beneath the form. Yet Tegnér realized the ambiguity in which he was involved and keenly felt the burden of a task which compromised his strict sense of intellectual honesty.

Strictly speaking, Tegnér begged the question in his official religious utterances, inasmuch as theology as such cannot be merged into pure religion and still preserve its essential character as distinct from the latter. But he was true to himself and to his duty as a Lutheran bishop insofar as he assumed that the essential aim of the church was to elevate and purify religion in whatever form it might appear. As the enemy of theology it was impossible for Tegnér to harmonize irreconcilable elements, but as the friend of religion and its highest officer in the land it was possible for him to avoid a literal dilemma, when the question at stake was not of the letter but of the spirit.

The question naturally arises as to Tegnér's conception of pure religion or pure Christianity as opposed to theology. The essence of the Christian religion is based upon the eternal verities and as such coincides with much which is found in all religions. But the distinct and individual interpretation which Tegnér gave to these eternal verities of the Christian religion was a product not only of his individual temperament and training (cf., for instance, his distinct leaning towards Hellenic ideals) but also of the philosophic thought of the era in which he lived, viz., the ideals of the Romantic School of Philosophy. In spite of Tegnér's aversion to philosophic speculation he, nevertheless, imbibed the essential doctrines of the Pantheists and Mystics of his time, as well as the moral precepts of the Kantian School. For a clear understanding of the relation which Tegnér's religious philosophy bore towards the philosophic speculation of his time it is necessary to review briefly the essential philosophic doctrines of the Swedish Romantic School.

² In a letter to Geijer (1821) he says: "I know no greater enemy to religion than theology."

II

PHILOSOPHY OF THE SWEDISH ROMANTIC SCHOOL

The religious philosophy of the Swedish Romanticists was a direct inheritance from the Romantic School in Germany and received no distinctive interpretation which could be classified as peculiarly Swedish. The ultra-mundane God, a Divinity removed from humanity, was discarded in favor of the pantheistic conception of God as residing in and as the essence of all things; a consciousness of oneness with this infinite Spirit and a feeling of dependence upon Him is religion; since the finite cannot comprehend the infinite, the apprehension of God thru cognition was rejected as impossible; only thru intuition (i.e., religious inspiration) is the divine nature revealed to man; institutional religion prevents this apprehension of God, so far as the creeds and dogmas of institutional religion are not the product of individual communion with the Divinity; inner experience is the true essence of religion which is primarily an act of faith.

Starting from the basis established by Herder and Lessing, who taught the lesson of comparative religions and established the doctrine that the real value of religion consists not in its dogmas but in its views of life, the German philosophers of the 18th and early 19th century freed the Protestant religion from the fetters of ecclesiasticism and laid the foundation of modern theology. Kant distinguished rational from empirical knowledge and by his Categorical Imperative established a new system of ethics; Fichte reduced the universe both spiritual and material to one substance (viz., a product of the mind), and upon Fichte's transcendental philosophy was reared the structure of Schelling's pantheism to which Scheiermacher gave definite and classic expression.

As in Germany, so too in Sweden it was Schelling and Schleiermacher who exerted the most profound influence upon the religious thought of the Romanticists. Religion became a thing of inspiration to be expressed like poetry in symbolic figures; poetry became religious and religion poetic. But in Sweden this love of the poetry and the splendor of religion did

not, as in Germany, bring about a distinct tendency towards Catholicism, but the Catholic spirit of mystic adoration was, nevertheless, manifest in the general attitude of Swedish writers towards the phenomena of the universe. Thus for instance, Atterbom, the leader of the Phosphorists, says: "All the highest, all reality in life is unfathomable in its nature; piety, love, friendship, are they not at the same time the darkest and the clearest of all mysteries?" Romantic mysticism owed its origin to medieval mysticism (especially to the Neo-Platonists and the German mystics, Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme), but the ethical tone which the Swedish Romanticists adopted was strictly modern, insofar as this element was based upon the humanitarian idealism as represented by the philosophic doctrines of Kant and Fichte and reflected in the literary works of Herder, Lessing and Schiller.

Of all the Swedish Romantic writers the element of ethical idealism was most marked in Tegnér. Schiller's humanity and Kant's Categorical Imperative were as fundamental to Tegnér's conception of religion as was the pantheistic mysticism of Schelling. Christianity consisted for Tegnér in the highest form of virtue as well as in that spiritual intuition which identified man with God. His love of the beautiful and of nature did not lead him away from the orthodox conception of a personal deity towards whom man owes the eternal debt of moral rectitude and duty. Tegnér's pantheism was closely akin to that of Goethe and Emerson in which this adoration of the divine spirit was identical with the perception of the spiritual laws of the universe. Like Carlyle and Herder, Tegnér identified religion with morality, since to him all religions were mere symbols or outward expressions of infinite truths within.

III

TEGNÉR AND ORTHODOXY

Altho such was the general nature of Tegnér's personal convictions regarding religion, he was, nevertheless, by virtue of his office constrained to keep the traditional terminology in his interpretation of orthodox theology. Under the existing circumstances it would have been impossible for Tegnér to

expound the ulterior significance of orthodox theology, if the symbol for the truth were discarded. Therefore, in his official sermons we find no philosophical terms (like Schelling's *Weltseele* or Emerson's *Over-Soul*) for those doctrines which departed from strictly orthodox conceptions. Tegnér taught his people in the simple and traditional way and with the traditional terms which they understood.

Thos deogmas of the Orthodox Church to which Tegnér gave a new and therefore (in the strict sense of the word) heretical interpretation may be summarized as follows: a) Revelation and Miracles, b) The Divinity of Christ and Vicarious Atonement, c) The Nature of God and Immortality, d) The Trinity, e) Faith, and f) Christianity and Religion.

a. *Revelation and Miracles*

To Tegnér revelation did not consist in a supernatural intervention in the order of nature, whereby God 'reveals' himself personally to man, but in the divine nature of man himself who by opening his soul to the Infinite receives the influx of God's wisdom, an inspiration which is wholly natural and at the same time divine (i.e., in the orthodox sense, 'supernatural'). This interpretation of the orthodox dogma of revelation is in keeping with the religious ecstasy of the Mystics and with the pantheism of Schelling's Romantic philosophy. God and man are one in essence and the intercourse between the two is religious revelation. "Revelation," says³ Tegnér (*Vid kyrkoherdars invigning i ämbetet*, i Tolg, 1824), "is only the intelligence of the eternal expressed in human language."

In his *Tal vid prestmötet i Vexjö (vid mötets början)*, 1836, Tegnér says: "Nature has mysteries and will always have them despite natural science, why shouldn't the hidden depths of the soul have them too." One is reminded here of Atterbom's declaration (quoted above) that all life is a mystery. To the Romantics, therefore, religious revelation was no more a mystery than any other phenomenon in life.

³ "Uppenbarelsen är blott den eviges förnuft, uttaladt i ett menskligt tungomål."

"But," says Tegnér (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 5, 1839), "divine revelation, tho one in substance, appears in manifold forms, like the refracted light of the sun which, tho uniform in character, appears to human eyes in a thousand different forms and colors." "This diversity of form is due to the fact that the divine will accommodates itself to the special conditions of human society and to the spiritual needs of man"⁴ (*Vid kyrkovisitationer*, i Agunnaryd, 1830). "The revealed word (i.e., the Bible) is the ideal, the most beautiful form in which the divine will has expressed itself; the apostles were 'par excellence' God's chosen (*Guds utkorade*) and as such constitute for humanity the purest source of revelation" (*ibid.* and *Vid prestvigningar*, No. 2).

Tegnér's assumption that the divine will accommodates itself to the special conditions of human society and, therefore, every era and every race has its own particular revelation is clearly a reflection of Herder's theory of national organisms, each living out its own spirit and individual forms of language, religion, society, etc. (cf. *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, 1784-91). Furthermore, the doctrine of God's chosen, as instruments of revelation, harmonizes⁵ exactly with the Romantic ideal of *genius*, which is divine in whatever form it may appear. The worship of *genius* played an especially important part in German Romanticism.

"Revelation, being a diverse phenomenon, cannot in itself furnish a uniform structure for religion; even Biblical conceptions vary widely; such a uniform structure is found only in the

⁴ "Och på samma sätt är det äfven med det himmelska ordet, som också ursprungligen var ett; men det har brutit sig och skiftar i mångahanda färger, efter olika tider och omständigheter, olika seder och tänkesätt, olika språk och folkslag."

Wherever the original Swedish is not quoted, I have endeavored to give a very free rendering of the author's thought.

⁵ For instance, in defending the apostles as the purest source of divine revelation Tegnér said (*Vid kyrkovisitationer*, i Agunnaryd, 1830) that the apostles are rightly considered as inspired from above, "since all truth, all excellence, in short everything which in any particular era greatly exceeds the normal measure of thought, may and ought to be regarded as an inspiration from above."

spirit of revelation’’⁶— which is, of course, identical with pure religion—(*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 5, 1839). Here Tegnér explains the self-contradictory elements in the Bible and the affinity of the Christian religion to other religions by conceding, as Lessing so nobly elucidated in his *Nathan der Weise*, the fallibility of the Christian religion and the element of truth in all religions.

“But revelation will always exist so long as the human race exists, for each individual has God’s revelation within himself’’⁷ (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 13, 1827). “God’s word will endure forever, not thru any miracle (to which recourse is often taken) but by virtue of its own inner truth and life” (*Vid kyrkoinvigningar*, i Skatelöf, 1825). “God’s word is on this account the word of the noblest and purest humanity; it is ‘the revealed word’ and therefore the word of the highest intelligence. For revelation is God’s intelligence; human intelligence is merely a ray of God’s light; the essence of both is identical. Therefore, there can be no real conflict between revelation and reason, anymore than between a child’s simple language and that of an educated speaker’’⁸ (*ibid.*)

This interpretation of revelation, which levelled the distinction between the essence of the natural and supernatural, of the human and divine, was the cardinal doctrine of Romantic mysticism to which Schelling gave definite philosophic expression in his doctrine of the *Weltseele*. Divine inspiration comes to all

⁶ “En sådan lärobyggnad finnes icke, och kan, enligt sakens natur, ej finnas i bibeln; men väl förefinnas byggnadsämnen dertill, ehuru i spridd ordning.”

⁷ “Ty icke är uppenbarelsen slutad, utan den fortgår alltjämt, icke blott i den yttre naturen . . . , utan äfven i människans eget bröst; och så länge det finnes ett människoslägte, måste det äfven i denna mening finnas en uppenbarelse.”

⁸ In this sermon Tegnér summarizes the qualities indispensable to the religious teacher, viz., sincerity, moral integrity and wisdom. A religious teacher must be “öppen som ett barn, fast som en man och vis som en gubbe.” These are almost the very same words which the author uses in the characterization of Björn, Frithiof’s foster-brother, in the *Frithiofssaga* (*Frithiof tager arf efter sin fader*):

“Björn hette den unge,
glad som ett barn, men fast som en man och vis som en gubbe.”

lofty souls who are in tune with the Infinite; human nature at such moments of communion becomes conscious of its divinity and soars aloft where it merges with the Infinite. This doctrine is repeatedly emphasized by Tegnér thruout his writings and receives its final and masterful expression in his speech *Efter talets slut vid Gustaf Adolfsfesten* (1832).

Emerson too shared this cardinal tenet of Romantic mysticism in his doctrine of the *Over-Soul*. Communion with the *Over-Soul* is religious intuition or divine revelation; such revelation comes to the devout in moments of solitude and reflection and "is," says Emerson (*Essays*, 1st series, p. 304), "always a miracle, which no frequency of occurrence or incessant study can ever familiarize, but which must always leave the inquirer stupid with wonder." "In the *universal miracle*, petty and particular miracles disappear" (*ibid.*, p. 57). This mystical revelation of the divine Spirit Emerson often designated in the words of Plotinus as "a flight of the alone to the alone."

According to Emerson, religious intuition brings the human soul much nearer to God than does learning or acquired knowledge (i.e., cognition). "The idiot, the Indian, the child and unschooled farmer's boy," he says (*Conduct of Life*, 1860, p. 15), "stand nearer to the light by which nature is to be read than the dissector or the antiquary." Exactly this faith in the simple, natural instincts of humanity, which Rousseau postulated as the sole means of true knowledge and which Emerson predicated as the essence of religious faith, Tegnér expressed most beautifully in his poem *Fridsroster* (1806):

"Männ' den vise med sin lära,
än så djup, så konstigt byggd,
kommer verldens Gud mer nära,
än den vilde med sin dygd?"⁹

It is rather surprising in view of Tegnér's interpretation of revelation as part of the natural order of the universe that he

⁹ "Can the wise man with his learning, however deep or skillfully constructed, come closer to God's world than the simple man with his virtue?"

Altho poetry never can be adequately translated, an English rendering of the thought in Tegnér's verse may not be out of place in connection with the question under discussion.

should have made any concessions to the orthodox dogma of immediate and miraculous intervention upon the part of God in man's affairs. Yet in his eleventh sermon (*Vid prestvigningar*) he makes a distinct implication that this may occasionally happen during the especially critical periods of man's history, when human nature stands in need of a complete moral transformation. "God," he says, "most generally works thru human beings and by natural means. He is not like a bungling watch-maker who always must repair the faults in his work, but if He at any time appears and *reveals Himself immediately* (*verkar omedelbarligen*), it is during the great crises of the world's history when the clock of the age has run down and the wheels must be melted over and the hours told according to another standard of time. Then comes the power of the Highest down upon earth and overshadows humanity, then the word becomes flesh and dwells within man."

"The purpose of revelation," says Tegnér (*Vid kyrkoinvigningar*, i Väckelsång, 1832) "is to give light unto men, for light is reason; reason is God's first and original revelation; God has written the law in man's heart. But the writing in man's heart is for the most part dark and illegible; therefore, revelation has come thru the Holy Scriptures not to contradict but to confirm, not to drive out but to clarify reason. The essential doctrines of revelation comprise all the Christian virtues and encompass all the spiritual and moral needs of humanity."

In revelation, therefore, Tegnér saw the essence of pure Christianity made clear to humanity and thru revelation humanity brought face to face with God. Since man's religious perception is of divine origin, the question of mediate or immediate revelation is (according to Tegnér) not of great importance; the divine nature of the Bible still remains intact. Thus Tegnér compromised the orthodox conception of revelation by levelling the distinction between the human and divine, i.e., by assuming, exactly as did Coleridge, Emerson, and Goethe, that all religious inspiration is a revelation of the divine spirit.

The importance of revelation lay for Tegnér in its moral and spiritual significance to humanity. Therefore, poet that he

was and averse to all philosophic speculation, it was quite natural and consequential for him to accept the Bible as a divine document. He says (*Vid kyrkoinvigningar*, i Berg, 1835): "To explain the relation of God to man is impossible; the whys and wherefores are not a practical consideration. The cause of religion suffers at the hands of philosophic speculators who have split hairs in the attempt to establish a line of demarcation between the immediate and the mediate relation of God to man, between God and nature. The main thing is the holy spirit of God, which unites all Christian churches and gives a meaning to civilization and humanity."

This was exactly Emerson's attitude towards revealed religion. God cannot be left out of creation, but the line of demarcation between God and man can never be established. In his *Essay on the Preacher* (1879) he says: "Unlovely, nay, frightful is the solitude of the soul which is without God in the world. I cannot keep the sun in heaven, if you take away the purpose that animates him. The ball, indeed, is there; but his power to cheer, to illuminate the heart as well as the atmosphere, is gone forever." And in his *Conduct of Life* (1860) he says:

"Draw, if thou canst, the mystic line,
Severing rightly his from thine
Which is human, which divine."

Furthermore, the emphasis which Tegnér laid on the individual worth of the human soul which he regarded as *the greatest miracle of all nature*¹⁰ (*Vid kyrkoinvigningar*, i Solberga, i Gårdsby, 1837) represents exactly the cardinal thesis of Emerson and The Early Unitarians of New England, who were very largely indebted, as was Tegnér, to the idealistic philosophy of the German Romanticists.

¹⁰ "Ju mera vår själ vaknar till klart medvetande, ju bättre hon lär känna sin bestämmelse och sitt värde" (*i Solberga*).

"Hans under omgifva er öfverallt, ifrån solen till solgrandet. Men det största undret är dock inom er själfva, i en själ, som anar hans väsende, i ett hjerta, som känner hans kärlek, som hoppas på hans barmhertighet" (*i Gårdsby*).

b. *The Divinity of Christ and Vicarious Atonement*

Tegnér's attitude towards this question received its most beautiful expression in the last canto (*Försoningen*) of the *Frithiofssaga* (cf. the writer's article in *J.E.G. Ph.*, X, pp. 557–571). No one of Tegnér's doctrines seems so heretical as his outspoken views regarding the nature of Christ and of Vicarious Atonement. Yet they are in perfect harmony with his general conception of religious revelation, as set forth under the previous heading.

By levelling the distinction between the nature of the human and the divine and thus merging the two into one substance, as Schelling and Schleiermacher did, Tegnér found no real contradiction in assuming Christ as divine and as the Son of God, yet at the same time as human and natural. The same argument which applied to Tegnér's conception of revelation applied with equal weight and logical sequence to the nature of Christ.

In his second sermon (*Vid prestvigningar*) Tegnér says: "When it is said that *no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven*, this applies not only to the great Son of God, but also in a more general sense to the human soul which is also a Son of God and descended out of heaven." The divinity of Christ is, therefore, based upon the assumption of the divinity of the human soul.

This is the cardinal doctrine of the Unitarians and may, therefore, rightly be considered as heretical, since it is in direct contradiction to the orthodox conception, viz., that the divine and the human, altho united in the person of Jesus Christ, are *not* identical in essence, the nature of the Godhead being distinct from that of humanity.

"The conception of God as the Father and Christ as the Son is mere verbiage, proving the consanguinity of both and their identity of essence. Christ represents humanity and as the crown of humanity he links the human to the divine. This results not in a contradiction but in a harmony of the two natures" (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 4). "What is the final solution of this long controversy concerning the two natures in

Christ," asks¹¹ Tegnér (*ibid.*), "if not this, that in proportion as man rises, he approaches divinity and becomes merged in it, or in other words, that every human being is destined to become a son of God?"

Instead of pulling God down to the level of man and endowing Him with human attributes Tegnér raises man up to the level of God and endows him with divine attributes; the highest step in this ascension of humanity towards God is realized in the character and life of Jesus Christ. This is, of course, the very fundament upon which Emerson's doctrine of the Over-Soul rested. Therefore, it is not surprising that Emerson's utterances regarding the divinity of Christ should be in complete accord with Tegnér's. "If a man is at heart just," says Emerson in his memorable Address in the Divinity School of Harvard University (1838), "then insofar is he God; the safety of God, the majesty of God do enter into that man with justice." And again he says (*Miscellanies*, p. 125): "He (Jesus) spoke of miracles, for he felt that man's life was a miracle and all that man doth; and he knew that his daily miracle shines *as the character ascends*."

But while Tegnér attached to the person of Jesus a reverence tantamount to deification, Emerson viewed the personality of Jesus in the light of historical religion rather than as a final and perfect expression of God in humanity. In fact, Emerson regarded the deification of Christ as a theological crime and the overexaltation of his personality as a source of error and sin, giving rise to the incomprehensible doctrine of the Trinity and missing the real point in Christ's teaching. "Historical Christianity," says Emerson (*Address* of 1838), "has dwelt, it dwells, with noxious exaggeration about the person of Jesus."

Such a feeling as this regarding the person of Jesus, which the iconoclastic exponent of New England Transcendentalism expressed, was entirely alien to Tegnér who still retained much of orthodox reverence and whose position in the Lutheran

¹¹ "Och den långa tvisten om de bågge naturerna i Kristo, hvad blir dock dess slutliga upplösning, om icke den, att i den mån människan stiger, nalkas hon gudomen och sammanfaller med den, eller med andra ord, att hvarje människobarn är bestämdt att blifva en gudason?"

Church made a conciliatory spirit incumbent upon him. To be sure, he denounced the doctrine of Vicarious Atonement¹² (which grew out of the orthodox conception of Christ's divinity) with an indignation fully as intense as Emerson's and referred to Paul's abstruse theology¹³ with unfeigned contempt, but these were theological dogmas, not persons. Since the Christian religion signified to Tegnér religion in its highest form and since he did not assume, as did Emerson, the impersonal attitude of the religious philosopher but rather the personal attitude of the religious teacher, the person of Jesus remained for him in all its traditional sanctity. The deification of Christ was for Tegnér not a theological crime so long as the *spirit* of Christ was a living reality in the church. Emerson's critical attitude sharply distinguished between the *deity* and the *divinity* of Christ. The "crack"¹⁴ which to Emerson seemed so large was for Tegnér sealed by the spirit of Christ's teachings, whether irrational dogmas persisted or not. Tegnér did not dispense with dogmas so long as they could serve his purpose in the reconstruction and purification of the church; he was an iconoclast only so far as the *spirit* of orthodoxy was concerned.

The doctrine of Vicarious Atonement and of the Salvation of the Soul, as conditioned by a literal faith in the divinity of Christ as the personal Son of God, received scant courtesy from Tegnér (cf. his letter to Geijer, quoted in foot note 12). As a disciple of Kant and Schiller, Tegnér's moral sense was outraged by the assumption of an act which had no necessary connection with the moral laws of the universe. His conviction that *salvation by character* is the only means for the redemption of a sinful soul Tegnér expressed in unequivocal terms in the last canto of his *Frithiofssaga* (cf. the writer's article, *J.E.G.Ph.*, X, p. 557-571).

¹² In a letter to Geijer (1821) he says: "the orthodox conception of Vicarious Atonement is a butcher's idea, which is heathen both in sight of God and reason."

¹³ "Paul's theological system is nothing more than Hellenic sophistry inoculated into Jewish barbarity" (*ibid*).

¹⁴ I refer here to Emerson's critical spirit as expressed in his oft quoted aphorism: "There is a *crack* in everything God has made" (Essay on *Compensation*, *Essays*, 1st series, 1841).

Here again Tegnér's religious views coincide exactly with the cardinal doctrine of the Unitarians, who in accordance with the Kantian system of ethics postulate the freedom of the will as the basis of all moral action. Just as the Early Unitarian Movement was a moral reaction against the dogma of predestination and the mechanical doctrines of Calvinism, so too Tegnér opposed the orthodox dogma of Vicarious Atonement as a moral monstrosity which contradicted the ethical principle of Christ's teachings and reduced religion to a soulless mechanism. The existence of such a dogma in the Christian Church Tegnér explains¹⁵ (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 4) as due to the fact that reconciliation with God has always been a necessity for the human soul. Religion, as the function for the expression of man's moral and spiritual needs, must necessarily lay great stress on the necessity for *atonement*, otherwise morality will not exercise its proper function in religion. "But if religion stops at the mere form and does not penetrate the substance beneath, which is the law and essence of its nature, then religion becomes a mere perfunctory ceremony, a moral sham which in reality is only a form of barbarism in nowise different from that of the primitive heathen, for it desecrates the highest and mocks the holiest of sentiments"¹⁶ (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 8).

This is exactly the spirit of Emerson in his *Address* of 1838, which may well be considered as the first classic expression of American Unitarianism, when he says: "To aim to convert man by miracles is a profanation of the soul. A true conversion, a true Christ, is now, as always, to be made, by the reception of beautiful sentiments."

"The doctrine of atonement," says¹⁷ Tegnér (*Vid kyrkovisitationer*, i Agunnaryd, 1830), "has been interpreted and may be

¹⁵ "Men det vissa är dock, att hon (försoningen) är och alltid varit ett behof för människohjertat . . . , att hon varit och är och förblifver verldshistoriens hjertblod."

¹⁶ "Den ytliga kristendom, som stannar vid ett blott vetande eller yttre plägseder och derigenom tror sig rädda själen, den är sämre än judarnes galskap och hedningarnes villo; ty den gör det högsta lågt och drifver gäck med det heligaste."

¹⁷ "Försoningenslära, som väl kan tydas och verkligen blifvit tydd på mångfaldigt sätt, men dock alltid såsom sin yttersta grund förutsätter menniskans brister och en Gud, som i nåd förbarmar sig deröfver."

interpreted in various ways, but it always postulates human frailty and a God of infinite mercy. Man's sinful nature is only an expression of his finiteness, but God is perfect and therefore man is in everlasting need of divine Grace."

This tendency towards evil, to which the human soul is naturally heir, accounts for the Biblical conception of the Fall of Man. "Conscience teaches us," says¹⁸ Tegnér (*Vid kyrkvisitationer*, i Kalfsvik, 1828), "that we cannot attain to divine perfectivity, that we always have something for which we must reproach ourselves, that we are born with a tendency towards evil, which the Scriptures call the Fall of Man."

Jesus Christ, as the intercessor¹⁹ of mankind, occupies this supreme office by virtue of the fact "that his life and teachings have reconciled man with God (not God with man); the moral character of Christ and his unparalleled sacrifice exalt him to the office of Saviour"²⁰ (*Vid kyrkoinvigningar*, i Malmbäck, 1828). "The Son," says Tegnér (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 4), "is humanity represented in humanity's crown, in Jesus of Nazareth."

According to Tegnér, therefore, salvation of the soul depends not upon the faith in Christ's divinity as the personal Son of God, but upon the faith in the Christian virtues which made Jesus the Saviour of humanity. "Whatever wrong thou thyself hast done, no one else but thou thyself can atone for," Tegner makes the priest²¹ of Balder say to Frithiof in the canto "Atone-

¹⁸ "Om vi endast lyssna till den inre rösten i vårt hjerta, till samvetets vittnesbörd, så lär det oss osvikeligen, att vi icke kunne uppnå den helighet, som kan bestå inför gudomligheten, att vi alltid ha något att förebrå oss . . . , att vi äro födde med en böjelse till det onda, som skriften kallar för syndafallet."

¹⁹ "Vi erkänna blott *en* medlare, som är Jesus Kristus" (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 5).

²⁰ "Jesus Kristus . . . , som var världens försonare, emedan han försonat, icke Gud med menniskan, utan menniskan med Gudi; som befriat oss ifrån syndens herravälde, derigenom att han i sin egen lefnad visat oss helighetens väg; som är allas vår frälsare genom sin lära, den han bekräftat genom sin död."

²¹ In his thirteenth sermon (*Vid prestvigningar*) Tegnér says: "Hvad vill han (läraren) i templet, der han skall förkunna försoningens gudomliga lära, om hans eget hjerta är bittert och hatfullt och ofördragsamt." Exactly this thought occurs in the canto *Försoningen* (*Frithiofssaga*), when the priest of Balder tells Frithiof who still hates King Bele's sons: "Kan du ej förlåta, yngling, hvad vill du i Balders hus?"

ment" (*Försonigen*) of the *Frithiofssaga*. Nor does any sin weigh with the Almighty, if committed involuntarily or in ignorance of the law.²²

This spirit of moral majesty, which pervades all Tegnér's writings and especially his poetry, received in *Efter talets slut vid Vexjö gymnasii jubelfest* (1843) its final and classic expression (cf. the writer's article, *Pessimism in Tegnér's Poetry*, p. 132). Atonement is the final aim of true religion; reconciliation with God is the necessary condition for every human soul in order to attain spiritual progress, and this is (according to Tegnér) the only really Christian or religious factor that can be deduced from the orthodox doctrine of Vicarious Atonement. Since this doctrine denied the fundamental principle of the moral law (i.e., the principle of cause and effect) it became for Tegnér an immoral doctrine, which in his official religious utterances he found very difficult to harmonize with his own ideals as to the dignity of human character and the moral worth of human conduct.

c. *The Nature of God and Immortality*

Tegnér's conception of God was fundamentally the product of orthodox theism, blended, however, very largely with Romantic pantheism to which he added a certain element of Hellenic aestheticism (cf. especially his poem *Träden* (1813) and his *Epilog* of 1820). In this again Tegnér showed a striking similarity to Emerson and Goethe, who combined both the pantheistic and deistic elements in their conception of God, in that while they denied any essential distinction between the nature of God and man, yet at the same time they conceded the doctrine of moral freedom and individual diversity. But more than either of these two poets Tegnér clung devoutly to the Christian conception of a personal God, who as supreme ruler of the universe bears a personal relation to man. Altho God is a person, He is at the same time a spirit and the supreme law of the universe, a being whose nature is synonymous with the eternal verities; thru 'revelation' or religious experience His

²² "Guds barmhertighet är oändlig, och hvad menniskan ej frivilligt brutit, det kan hans rättvisa icke bestraffa" (*Vid ett barns dop*).

personal nature is made known to man (cf. *Vid prestvigningar*, No. 2).

Orthodox theism and the pantheism of the Romanticists differed not so much in regard to the essential nature of God as with respect to the personality of God. The Pantheists denied any personality to God; God is not a conscious being or personality, but an abstract essence, a life-power constantly at work in a process of self-evolution. The Christian Theists, on the other hand, personified this 'abstract essence' and endowed it with attributes corresponding to human conceptions. "God created man in His own image and man returned the compliment," said Voltaire. But, as a matter of fact, the Christian conception is insofar pantheistic as God is represented as everywhere existent, a ubiquitous and omniscient being.²³ But the pantheistic doctrine of Hegel and (to a lesser degree) of Schelling seemed to Tegnér to represent a mere cosmic mechanism based upon law itself rather than upon a supreme spirit as author of the law; back of the law must exist the infinite personality of God.

In his letter to C. F. af Wingård (1835) Tegnér expressed his aversion to all philosophic speculation and especially to Hegel's abstract doctrines on the ground of their mechanical nature. Religion is a matter of feeling and postulates a personal relation between man and God; personal immortality is a necessity because it represents the realization of man's personal hopes and ideals. "I could bow down," he continues,²⁴ "just as readily before Baal as before this new-fashioned Christ-god, which (note well) never came to full consciousness except in Hegel and his adepts."

Exactly this thought he reproduces with satirical humor in his poem entitled *Panteismen*:

"Gud är ej till. Han *blir*, der han förnimmer
sig sjelf, lik spegelns bild, ej sedd, ej till.

²³ This is the main theme of Tegnér's sermon at Berg (*Vid kyrkovisitationer*, 1835). He lays great stress on the Psalmist's praise of God as the omnipresent, universal spirit of creation.

²⁴ "Jag kunde likaså gerna böja knä för Baal som för denna nymodiga Kristus-gud, som *n.b.* ej kommit till fullt medvetande af sig sjelf förr än i Hegel och hans adepter."

I stjernan är han rörelse och skimmer,
i Hegel *tanke*. Tänk den, om du vill!"²⁵

Tho ridiculing Hegel's conception of God (as a mere thought-mechanism) and of an impersonal immortality, Tegnér in this same poem appeals to *impersonal* nature to confirm his own conception of *personal* immortality:

"Odödlighet, som ej vet af sig? Svara,
hvad är väl det? Nej, gif mig Miltons dikt
om paradiset och fall och död! Förklara
ej bibelns ord det samma?—O, hur rikt,
hur skönt syns allt! Låt oss gå ner i dalar,
der trasten slår i björkens äreport,
ros rodnar för sin längtan, bäcken talar
om Gud, som lefver, och allt skönt, han gjort!"²⁶

Thus did Tegnér blend the pantheistic with the deistic conception of God.

To Tegnér, as to Emerson, the personality of God is revealed in the human soul; man has the divine law written within him and therefore must be immortal.

Emerson says (*Essays*, 1st series, p. 265): "Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person, who in his integrity worships God, becomes God."

And Tegnér says²⁷ (*Vid kyrkoinvigningar*, i Berg, 1835): "The spirit of God, to be sure, no longer comes in flaming fire,

²⁵ "God does not *exist*, He is *evolved*; His self-consciousness is like the reflection in a mirror, He himself being invisible and non-existent. In the stars He is motion and light, in Hegel He is *thought*. Think that, if you want to!"

Tegnér purposely represents the doctrine of Hegel as confusing and self-contradictory.

²⁶ "Unconscious (i.e., impersonal) immortality? Answer, what does that mean? Give me rather Milton's poem about Paradise and the Fall and death. Do not the words of the Bible have the same significance? O, how rich and beautiful does all creation appear! Let us go down into the dale where the thrush sings in the birch-tree's triumphal arch, where the rose blushes with desire and the brook speaks of the living God and of all the beauty He has wrought."

²⁷ "Väl kommer den anden icke numera såsom förr *med eldstungor*, men han röjer sig ännu alltjämt såsom en flamma, hvilken lyser, värmer och renar hjertat."

but it moves like a bright flame *within* the human heart, illuminating, warming and purifying it."

To Tegnér personal immortality is the realization of this divine law of religious instinct, for which he postulates an author of benign intelligence whose purpose is to fulfill the spiritual aspirations of humanity. The conception of personal immortality leads to the conception of a personal God, since the obliteration of the human soul in the Godhead destroys the beauty of life and the continuity of its development.²⁸

Emerson, on the other hand, is not so clear as to personal immortality, for altho he recognizes the immortality of the soul, death is rather a losing of self to gain a higher self, a merging of the individual soul into the Over-soul. Such a sentiment, for instance, as Emerson expressed in his *Threnody* (1842):

"House and tenant go to ground
Lost in God, in Godhead found."

was much nearer to the philosophy of Hegel than to the religious intuitions of Tegnér. Yet both Emerson and Tegnér were in complete accord in their conception of God as the permanent essence of creation and in their conception of the human soul as a part of this divine essence. Emerson says in his *Threnody*:

"What is excellent,
As God lives, is permanent;
Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain;
Heart's love will meet thee again;"

In *Fridsröster* Tegnér admonishes man to guard this precious flame as his divine heritage:

"Menska, någon *himmelsk flamma*
lefver i dig, vårda den!"

²⁸ In his letter to C.F. af Wingård (1835) Tegnér says: "Jag tycker lifvet är ömkeligt nog ändå och vill åtminstone ej låta *bordemonstrera hoppet om dess bättre utveckling och skönare former.*" The italics are mine.

This is the same argument in favor of personal immortality (i.e., "it is so, because we feel it must be so") as Schiller put forth, for instance, in his poem *Hoffnung*:

"Und was die innere Stimme spricht,
Das täuscht die hoffende Seele nicht."

and in his *Woodnotes* (II):

"All the forms are fugitive,
But the substances survive."

The thought and even the language of these latter two verses find almost an exact counterpart in Tegnér's *Fridsröster*, when he says:²⁹

"Hvad tillfälligt är må falla,
det väsentliga består."

"The worship of God arouses within man a consciousness of his higher nature, his nobler origin, his consanguinity with God, his inherited right to immortality"³⁰ (*Vid kyrkoinvigningar*, i Solberga, 1837). Since man thus partakes of the divine nature from which he was sprung, Tegnér saw no valid obstacle in the way of viewing God as the Father³¹ and man as His child. The consanguinity of the two exists, even tho the personal attributes of each may differ according to the nature of the infinite and the finite; for only *like* knows *like*. A God of infinite mercy and goodness, the Father of us all, cannot,³² according to the essence of his nature, refuse his children their one great desire for justice and eternal life (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 2).

The benign nature of God (*Guds goda behag*) Tegnér repeatedly emphasized (cf. *Vid prestvigningar*, No. 2, 3; *Vid kyrkoinvigningar*, i Gårdsby, etc.). He violently opposed the Old Testament conception of a wrathful and avenging diety. "No one can be frightened into the Kingdom of Heaven," he says³³ (*Vid prestmötet i Vexjö, vid mötets slut*, 1836). Thus,

²⁹ "The fortuitous must perish,
The essential survives."

³⁰ "Han (Guds ande) väcker henne (menniskan) till medvetande af sin egen högre natur, sitt ädlare ursprung, sin släktskap med Gud, sin arfsrätt till odödlighet."

³¹ In *Fridsröster* Tegnér says:

"Ack, hvad gör det, hur vi kalla
denne far, som dock är vår?"

³² "Gud är enkannerligen godhetens och barmhertighetens Gud; menniskoslägtet ligger som ett barn på hans arm, och han gläder sig, som en fader glädes, när det går hans söner väl."

³³ "Ingen skrämmes till himmelriket."

Tegnér espoused the spirit of the modern Liberal Church, which grew out of the harsh doctrines of Puritanism. In fact, his conception of God in its totality is intensely modern, for his personal God is but the concrete expression of the Spirit of the universe, as conditioned by the finite nature of man and the spiritual instincts of the human soul.

d. *The Trinity*

Tegnér regarded the orthodox dogma of the Trinity as one of the greatest absurdities in Christian theology. In a letter to Geijer (1821) he referred to the Trinity as "theology's squared circle," i.e., an impossible thing. According to his conception of the divine nature of man Tegnér found no real difficulty in reconciling his doctrine of the divinity of Christ with the orthodox view of the two-fold nature in Christ; for the Godhead *is* two-fold insofar as humanity is a part of it. But to encompass the personality of God within three natures was a far less logical process and required, therefore, a new interpretation of this third element, viz., the Holy Ghost.

Tegnér interpreted the nature of the Holy Ghost as being practically identical with that of *spirit*, i.e., the divine nature communicated from God to man. He does not attempt to define it, but postulates its existence on the basis of the life principle in nature and the spiritual instincts in man. The Holy Ghost is the essence of God's nature shed upon the world; it is the life of nature without and the functional organ of the soul within. "That the Holy Ghost should emanate from the Father and the Son is merely the theological vernacular for saying that it is the common thought of the two, that it links the divine with the highest in human nature; that is what we call as an individual personality the Holy Ghost"³⁴ (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 3). "The Holy Ghost," he says again (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 4), "is God's spirit; without it the world would be a dead mass, it is felt in every human heart that

³⁴ "Der utgår han (Guds ande) både af Fadern och Sonen, en djupsinnig bild, som betecknar, att han är begges gemensamma tanke, att han sammanbinder det gudomliga med det högsta menliga, der är han, hvad vi, såsom en särskild personlighet, kalla för den Helige Ande."

desires righteousness, seeks the truth and constructs the beautiful; it is everywhere present within us in our best, our holiest hours. To ask how it is communicated to man is equivalent to asking whether the spark is generated by the steel or by the flint, when it can be produced only by a co-operation between the two."

Tegnér, therefore, reduces the nature of God to one essence and whether that essence be expressed in two terms or in three, it remains indivisible and inseparable. Tegnér 'squared the circle' by making the three units equal to each other. In this, of course, he is despite his orthodox phraseology at one with the Pantheists and the Unitarians. His interpretation of the Trinity is strictly modern in spirit, being essentially the same as the so-called 'modal' Trinity of the progressive Orthodox Church of today, which regards the three Persons of God merely as *modes* or manifestations of the divine nature that in itself is inseparable and indivisible.

Tegnér's interpretation of the Holy Ghost as God's Spirit, the nature of which is incomprehensible and inscrutable but to apprehend which is the highest function of the soul, exactly accords with Emerson's views with regard to spirit. For instance, in his Essay on *Spirit* (*Nature Addresses*, 1836) Emerson says: "Of that ineffable essence which we call Spirit, he that thinks most, will say least. The essence refuses to be recorded in propositions, but when man has worshipped him intellectually, the noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God. It is the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it."³⁵

Furthermore, Tegnér's conception that the Holy Ghost is communicated only to those who are open to its influence,

³⁵ Undoubtedly both Emerson's conception of Spirit (as an intermediating principle between the individual soul and the universal spirit) and Tegnér's interpretation of the Holy Ghost (as God's spirit at work in the universe outside of man as well as within man) have a common origin in the tenet of Universal Soul (*Anima Mundi*-Schelling's *Weltseele* and Emerson's *World-Soul*) as taught by Platonism; the *Anima Mundi* was the third person in the Platonic trinity. In fact, the Christian Trinity was an outgrowth of the Platonic trinity to which the Neo-Platonists had given a symbolic and mystical interpretation.

i.e., to those souls who are in harmony with the divine law of the spirit, accords exactly with Emerson's view of religious intuition. To none but the pure in heart are these intuitions opened, "for *so to be* is the sole inlet of *so to know*" (*Essays*, 1st series, p. 290).

The purpose of the Holy Ghost is to arouse within man his spiritual nature, to enable him to recognize his affinity with God and the immortality of the soul³⁶ (*Vid kyrkoinvigningar*, i Solberga, 1837). Therefore, Tegnér laid great stress upon the ulterior and essential significance of a dogma which in its strictly orthodox interpretation has no real ethical or religious value.

e. Faith

Schleiermacher and the Romanticists conceived of religion primarily as an act of faith. The religion of reason with its artificiality and skepticism gave way to the devotion of instinct and to faith in its integrity as a guide to truth. Tegnér, like Goethe and Emerson, stood mid-way between these two extremes. Altho sharing with the Romanticists their conception of religion as primarily an act of faith, he conceded to rationalism the truth that faith must be in strict accord with reason. A rational faith, according to Tegnér, is not one which finds its sole source in reason, but rather one which, based upon spiritual instinct, is guided by reason. Thus, in his fundamental conception of religion Tegnér stood between the old and the new School of philosophy, just as in his literary views he stood between the two extremes of the Phosphorites and the older Gustavian School of conservative and classic ideals.

"Faith," says³⁷ Tegnér (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 2), "is nothing more than piety; that is to say, you entrust your whole

³⁶ "Han (den Helige Ande) gör henne (menniskan) uppmärksam derpå, att hon måste vara något mera än blott kropp. Han gör henne uppmärksam på krafter, som sträfvä utom det lekamliga . . . , han upplyfter henne till känslan af det, som i hennes väsende är det renaste, det högsta, det gudomliga. Han väcker henne till medvetande af sin egen högre natur, sitt ädlare ursprung, sin släktskap med Gud, sin arfsrätt till odödlighet" (cf. foot note 30).

³⁷ "Tro är ingenting annat än fromhet, det vill säga, att du öfverlemnar hela ditt väsende och med full tillförsigt åt Guds goda behag."

being with full confidence to God's benign nature." "Faith is the root and kernel of Christianity, but the first step to faith is knowledge; it is impossible to believe what no one has told you, insofar as you yourself have not discovered and perceived it"³⁸ (*Vid kyrkovisitationer*, i Agunnaryd, 1830). "There is a kind of doubt which is born of self-analysis; such is far from being reprehensible, it is rather the surest proof that one is seriously treating the most important things of human life. A thoughtful man wishes his faith to be founded on sure premises and the account balanced between reason and revelation"³⁹ (*Vid kyrkoherdars invigning i ämbetet*, i Tolg, 1824).

Tegnér's conception of religion as a system of ethics, as well as a feeling of dependence upon God, made faith a phenomenon which must accord with the moral laws of the universe. "Gold," he says (*ibid.*), "is tested in the crucible and truth by doubt; if they are genuine, they both emerge approved. This is just the glorious thing about Christ's teachings, that all their essential elements not only stand the test of time, but also show us in general a surer and shorter way to the truth." Faith in Jesus' precepts is, therefore, a wise and rational thing, because these precepts are in complete accord with the moral laws of the universe. The intuitive sense of the apostles arrived at the truth which reason now confirms. "Christianity," says⁴⁰ Tegnér (*ibid.*), "has, as it were, played its way up to the highest, like a child who finds the philosopher's stone in the grass." The man of spiritual faith is, therefore, truly wise, as Tegnér showed in his poem *Den vise* (1804) and as Lessing illustrated in his drama *Nathan der Weise*, provided his faith is in accord with the essentials of Christianity and pure religion.

³⁸ "Men första steget till tro är ju kunskap, det är ju omöjligt att tro hvad ingen har sagt dig, så framt du ej sjelf upfunnit och insett det."

³⁹ "Det gifves åter en art af tvifvelsmål, som födes af sjelfva pröfningen. . . . Ett sådant bekymmer är så långt ifrån att vara straffbart, att det snarare är säkraste bevis derför, att man med allvar behandlar mensklighetens viktigaste angelägenheter. En tänkande man vill ha sin tro byggd på säkra grunder, han vill ha räkningen uppgjord mellan förnuftet och uppenbarelsen."

⁴⁰ "Det är som om den hade lekt sig fram till det högsta, det är som om ett barn hade hittat de vises sten i gräset."

But faith must be something which can be translated into action and which forms an integral and indivisible part of man's conduct in life. Faith in itself is a realization of God's truth and not an outward act of compliance to the dictates of ecclesiastical authority; faith is, therefore, that act which makes religion a reality. "The Christian Church," says⁴¹ Tegnér (*Vid kyrkovisitationer*, i Pjetteryd, 1830), "is united not only by reason of its faith in the essential doctrines of religion, but also by reason of that faith, that right and living faith, which expresses itself in conduct, that faith which is the soul in the body of action, just as the sun expresses itself in daylight or the spring in flowers; and there is no other faith deserving of its own name, no other faith that works either for improvement in life or for blessedness in death."

Faith in the Christian virtues is the only means of salvation; a faith without inner conversion is dead. "He who relies upon a dead faith is like unto him who tries to find his way in the dark by believing in the sun"⁴² (*Vid kyrkoinnviningar*, i Malmbäck, 1828).

While Tegnér lamented the lack of religious faith, due to the materialism and skepticism of his age (cf. his speech upon Luther, *Vid jubelfesten*, 1817), he did not believe that faith was incompatible with reason. Like Emerson, he shared the Romantic doctrine of intuition, based upon Rousseau's theory of instinct, but united intuition with reason and with those moral and spiritual principles which reason has sanctioned as an essential part of pragmatic religion.

d. *Christianity and Religion*

From the foregoing analysis it is clear that Tegnér interpreted the cardinal doctrines of the Lutheran Church according to his own personal convictions regarding the principles of Christianity. The essential feature of this interpretation is its simplicity; in fact, the basic element of Tegnér's religion is noth-

⁴¹ "Men den osynliga församlingen, hon är äfven enhällig i den tron, i den rätta, den lefvande, som visar sig i gerningarna, i den tron, som är själen till handlingens kropp, som uttrycker sig i lifvet."

⁴² "Den som förlitar sig på en död tro utan lefvernets förbättring, han är lik den, som ville vägleda sig i mörkret derigenom, att han tror på solen."

ing more than the ethical system of Jesus Christ and a faith in the benign nature of God.

So far as historical Christianity is concerned, Tegnér did not share the orthodox view that the Christian religion is an isolated phenomenon sent down from heaven at a particular time as the infallible word of God, but was outspoken in his acceptance of the modern view regarding the continuity of religion; viz., that the Christian religion is but a part of universal religion, a link in the great chain of man's spiritual evolution and has, therefore, in essence always existed in the history of man insofar as man has ever been able to perceive religious truth.

"There was much Christianity before Christ's time," says⁴³ Tegnér (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 2), "Christianity is only religion's baptismal name." But religion has found its most ideal expression in Christianity, "for certain it is that Christ's teachings have cleansed away religion's shell and laid bare its kernel" (*ibid.*). "God's spirit has always, altho more or less suppressed, been active among men. This is the spirit of righteousness, of goodness and of the perfect"⁴⁴ (*Vid kyrkoinvigningar*, i Berg, 1835). "Human law in itself is nothing more than the divine law whose authoritative text-book is conscience, only adapted to the particular conditions of human society"⁴⁵ (*Vid kyrkoherdars invigning i ämbetet*, i Jönköping, 1827).

This heretical view that Christianity is not the sole and infallible expression of religion but must be interpreted in the light of comparative religions, was the very corner-stone of modern theology which Herder and Lessing had laid. In fact, Tegnér in the passages quoted above expressed essentially the same ideas and that too, in almost the same phraseology as did Lessing, who says (*Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, 1780) that the Old and New Testaments are to be regarded

⁴³ "Der fans mycken kristendom före Kristus, kristendomen är endast fromhetens dopnamn."

⁴⁴ "En sådan ande har alltid, ehuru mer och mindre hämmad, verkat i menskligheten. Det är det rättas, det godas, det fullkomligas ande."

⁴⁵ "Är mensklig lag i sig sjelf något annat än den gudomliga, hvars lagbok är samvetet, endast tillämpad till särskilda fall inom det menskliga samhället?"

merely as the religious *text-books* of humanity and that "there was a religion before there was a Bible (*Axiomata*, 5, 1778); Christianity existed *before* the evangelists and apostles wrote (*ibid.*, 6); the Christian religion is not true because the evangelists and apostles taught it, but they taught it because it is true" (*ibid.*, 9).

It is clear, therefore, that Tegnér accepted the Lutheran faith only insofar as it accorded with the essential principles of universal religion. His conception of humanity as an indivisible part of divine nature made religion an indivisible part of the universal spiritual organism of man. This was the main argument of the Early Unitarians against the infallibility of the Bible, as Emerson said (*The Preacher*, 1879): "Sensible men and conscientious men all over the world are of one religion,—the religion of well doing and daring, men of sturdy truth, men of integrity and feeling for others."

In the funeral sermon of Dr. S. Heurlin (1835) Tegnér ventures to offer us his definition of Christianity. "What is Christianity?" he says.⁴⁶ "By no means a mere system of dogmas; it is essentially *a manner of life* rather than a doctrine; it concern acts rather than intellectual comprehension; its center of life rests in pious sentiment, it appeals more to the heart than to the understanding." And again he says⁴⁷ (*Vid kyrkovisitationer*, i Pjetteryd, 1830): "The principles of Christianity are few and simple, insofar as they are essential; a child can comprehend them, for they are grasped less by the intellect than by the heart."

The essential nature of Christianity Tegnér expressed with splendid simplicity in his poetry.⁴⁸ Here Tegnér, like the poet

⁴⁶ "Hvad är kristendomen, sådan den framställes i sina urkunder? Ingalunda ett dogmatiskt system, den lemnar endast ämnen dertill. Den är i sitt innersta väsende mera lefverne än lära, den går mera ut på handling än begrepp, den fromma känslan är dess lifspunkt, den vänder sig mera till hjertat än förståndet."

⁴⁷ "Dessa (lärosatser) äro få och enkla, i den mån som de äro hufvudsakliga; ett barn kan fatta dem, ty de fattas mindre med förståndet än med hjertat."

⁴⁸ This was the case especially in *Fridsörter* (1806), *Nattvardsbarnen* (1820) and the *Friithiofssaga* (1825), cf. the writer's article *Försoningen in Tegnér's Friithiofssaga*.

Emerson, revealed his finest conception of religion. The message of his poetry can be summed up in his own words, when he he says in his sermon⁴⁹ (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 4): "Much depends upon the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, but little depends upon the various constructions laid upon them," and again in his sermon⁵⁰ (*Tal vid prestmötet i Vexjö*, 1836): "Holiness does not dwell in lecture-halls, but in the heart's chambers; real Christianity is not taught, it is lived." When again Tegnér says⁵¹ (*Vid kyrkovisitationer*, i Karlstorp, 1837): "Without love, tolerance or charity there is no real Christianity: he who hates and persecutes or harshly judges his brother, is only *a baptized heathen*," we have a clear and unqualified statement of that doctrine in which the (Christian) priest of Balder instructed the heathen Frithiof.

The inviolability of the moral law made religion for Tegnér an integral part of secular life (cf. his doctrine of *faith*). Since "Christianity is not taught but lived," religion and life must be identical. "Religion," he says,⁵² (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 11) "is not something created in an entirely different world and alien to this world, a sort of meteor, which suddenly and unexpectedly dropped down out of the heavens." Religion is the most important thing in everyday life, the most vital factor in the spiritual and moral health of the individual and of society. "The Church," he says⁵³ (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 6), "is the

⁴⁹ "På dess kristendomens hufvudläror beror mycket; på deras olika uppfattning föga."

⁵⁰ "Det heliga bor icke i lärosalarna, det bor i hjertkamrarna. Den egentliga kristendomen läres icke, utan han lefves."

⁵¹ "Utan kärlek, fördragsamhet och öfverseende finnes ingen verklig kristendom; den som hatar och förföljer eller strängt bedömmar sin broder, han är endast *en döpt hedning*."

⁵² "Denna tanke är först och främst falsk; ty den förutsätter att religionen skulle vara, hvad den icke är, icke kan vara, något fullkomligen afsöndradt och enstaka i menskligheten, någonting bildadt i en helt annan verld och främmande för denna, ett slags månsten, som plötsligen och oförtänt fallit ner ur skyarna."

⁵³ "Hvad är kyrkan, om icke hjertat i menskligheten, anden i samhällets kropp?"

heart of humanity, the soul in the body of society"; and again⁵⁴ (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 1): "As the oak dies first in its withering crown, so society dies first in religion and if religion dies, then the whole artificial fabric of the State also perishes." "Christianity constitutes the law of gravity in the spiritual world, it furnishes human aspirations with a fixed goal, it enables us to direct our thoughts towards a stable center"⁵⁵ (*Vid kyrkoherdars invigning i ämbetet*, i Tolg, 1824). Since religion is divine, "the Christian Church may rightly be considered as a divine institution"⁵⁶ (*Vid prestvigningar*, No. 2).

Religion too ought to inspire joy in the activities of everyday life; religion is a life-giving principle which animates the soul, arouses the best instincts and enhances the capacity of man to enjoy the blessings which God has conferred upon him⁵⁷ (*Vid kyrkoinvigningar*, i Malmbäck, 1828). For this reason Tegnér looked with disapproval upon the morbid asceticism and pharisaical attitude of the Pietists, who misinterpreted the real spirit of religion (cf. *ibid.*, and *Vid prestmötet i Vexjö, vid mötets början*, 1836). The Rationalistic Movement had resulted in an extreme emotional reaction which stifled the natural instincts and the healthy spirit of religious devotion. Tegnér's common sense preserved an equilibrium between the emotional excesses of the Pietists and the intellectual extreme of the Rationalists.

⁵⁴ "Eken dör först i toppen, som fornar; och på samma sätt dör samhället först i religionen; och dör *den* ut, då förvissnar äfven den konstlade, den hopsatta statskroppen."

⁵⁵ "Tyngkraften sammanhåller den yttre världen; men kristendomen är tyngkraften i andans värld: han sätter de mensklige önskingarna ett fast mål före, han ger alla tankens riktningar en säker medelpunkt." Cf. his poem *Vid förrättandet af en prestvigning*, 1837: "Tyngdpunkt blifver och är i lifvet religionen."

⁵⁶ "En befodringsanstalt för sådant ändamål är den kristna kyrkan, ett samfund af vägfärande till himlen. Hon är den högsta af alla inrättningar i menskligheten och anses därför med rätta för en gudomlig stiftelse."

This thought Tegnér expressed frequently in his sermons elsewhere; cf. for instance, *Vid prestvigningar*, No. 11: "Religionen är ju tydligen något gudomligt just derigenom, att hon är det högsta i menskligheten."

⁵⁷ "Men är icke evangelium ett gladt budskap, äro icke glädje och förnöjsamhet den rätta gudaktighetens vinning."

In his interpretation of religion from within as the highest faculty of the soul, Tegnér stood on the same ground as did Lessing (*Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*), who held that the Bible revealed nothing to man which man, if left to himself, would not discover by his own reasoning; only revelation imparts it more quickly and more easily. Like Lessing, Tegnér did not entirely break loose from the traditional belief; he accepted its premises, adopted its phraseology, but gave to it a new interpretation. Like Lessing, he appeared to be a theist, yet he was undoubtedly also a pantheist.

The fruits of Herder's and Lessing's critical methods profoundly affected the theology of Tegnér's time, but the rational elements gave way largely to the mysticism of the Romanticists. Here Tegnér stood more closely to Emerson, in that he combined the two systems of thought, establishing as their uniform moral basis the fundamental principles of Kant's ethical system. Tegnér's idealism, like that of Emerson, consisted in a heroic standard of ethics. Emerson's mystic transcendentalism was never free from that puritanic moral rigor characteristic of his age, and the same attitude in Tegnér is most aptly expressed in his own words:⁵⁸ "Lawful liberty is the Lutheran's natural faith." No doubt the Kantian idea of necessitated freedom was to a large extent that element which drew both Emerson and Tegnér close to Schiller and alienated them from Goethe for whom the ideal of self-abnegation or of self surrender was not necessary for the realization of good. Virtue, Schiller's great watch-word, was the cardinal doctrine in both Emerson's and Tegnér's philosophy. According to Tegnér, virtue is the one true criterion of religion and of life, "for this much we know," he says⁵⁹ (*Vid S. Heurlins graf*, 1835), "that life itself is worth nothing more nor less than the right things we have desired, the good we have done and the memory we leave after us." Virtue, however, is relative, not absolute, and therefore human character must be judged according to the light which

⁵⁸ "Lagbunden frihet är född luteran,"—*Vid jubelfesten*, 1817.

⁵⁹ "Att lifvet icke är annat värddt än det rätta man velat, det goda man uträttat och det minne man efterlemnar."

each human soul possesses.⁶⁰ Religion is then, according to Tegnér, more than virtue; it is also the faith in virtue as an expression of the moral integrity of the universe, i.e., the faith in a divine intelligence as the supreme ruler of the universe, whose nature is both love and law.

In these fundamental conceptions of religion Tegnér stood closest perhaps to Emerson of all the great religious thinkers of his age. The healthy, heroic, Romantic spirit was strongly manifested in the general attitude of both these poets towards religion. Religion calls for character and virtue, the qualities of the hero; it calls for the prophet's vision and the mystic soul of the seer. The Romanticists demanded just such visionary but self-reliant and heroic characters; such as, for instance, Tegnér depicted in his ideal of Charles XII. Just such a hero is Emerson's man of religion, when he says (*Sacrifice*):

" 'Tis Man's perdition to be safe
When for the Truth he ought to die."

or Tegnér's 'wise' man (*Den vise*), when he says:⁶¹

"He desires the right, regardless of reward,
And believes virtue beautiful, even if punished."

Both Emerson and Tegnér were poets and prophets of religion; both were religious philosophers, the product of the liberal tendencies of their age, but without any definitely arranged system of philosophy; both were great individual personalities who gave expression to the national genius in the realm of spiritual thought. So far as the essentials of religious philosophy are concerned, Emerson and Tegnér concurred in every respect. They concurred in the conception of 1) the absolute reality of spirit, 2) the benign nature of God, 3) the absolute integrity of

⁶⁰ Cf. *Efter talets slut vid Vexjö gymnasii jubelfest*, 1843.

⁶¹ "(han) vill det rätta, sorglös om dess lön,
och tror dygden, äfven straffad, skön."

I have taken the liberty to translate these lines in my text in order that the affinity of thought and language between the two poets might be presented with greater vividness. The words of the poet in these two lines epitomize the character of Tegnér's greatest heroine, Ingeborg, and to a lesser degree also of his hero, Frithiof, in the *Frithiofssaga*. Even to Björn, who is thoroughly heathen, Tegnér lends certain ideal qualities such as the religious man (i.e., the Christian) must have (cf. foot-note 8).

the individual soul, its divine nature, and the sovereign worth of character. And in the expression of these fundamental principles of religion both poets preserved a healthy, optimistic and rational equipoise. Both believed that no finite form of expression could reveal the fullness of truth, but whereas Tegnér was constrained by the social conditions under which he lived to reveal the truth thru the medium of orthodox symbolism, Emerson was free to fling aside the fetters of orthodox tradition and openly espouse the cause of religious emancipation. Therefore, many of Tegnér's sentiments seem to be at variance with Emerson's, but upon close scrutiny we find that the difference consists almost wholly in the manner of expression and that the spiritual affinity of the two poets is remarkably close. This fact is all the more striking in that there is no evidence that Tegnér was acquainted with the works of Channing, Emerson⁶² or any of the Early Unitarians; nor is there a single reference to Tegnér in any of the writings of the New England philosophers. The assumption of any influence upon the part of Tegnér on Emerson or vice-versa is, therefore, out of the question. Their spiritual affinity had a common ancestry in the history of religious thought which, based upon Neo-Platonic mysticism, culminated in the idealistic philosophy of the German Romantic School. In fact, the strictly metaphysical element in New England Transcendentalism owed its origin largely to German⁶³ idealism and we have seen that

⁶² Emerson wrote many of his essays in the 30's and therefore chronology does not forbid the possibility that Tegnér might have read them. It is, however, extremely improbable that Tegnér ever read a word of Emerson, since the latter, so far as I know, was not introduced into Sweden until much later.

⁶³ Cf. H. C. Goddard, *Studies in New England Transcendentalism*, 1908; and G. W. Spindler, *Life of Follen*, Chapter II, *His Relation to Unitarianism*, (pp. 146-185), 1917. For further bibliography, cf. Index to Spindler's work.

Both the New England Transcendentalists and the German Romantic philosophers owed many of those doctrines which they shared in common to Greek philosophy, especially to Plato and to the later mysticized scheme of Plato's philosophy, formulated by Plotinus, known as Neo-Platonism. While Emerson's writings undoubtedly bear traces of indebtedness to German idealism, he did not identify himself closely with the German philosophers. Tho he agreed with many of their fundamental doctrines, he sought to interpret them in the light of Plato and to identify them with their Hellenic sources (cf. *Complete Works*, I., 160, 329, V., 291 f., VIII, 180, Centenary Edition, 1903).

Tegnér's religious philosophy bore many clear traces from the same source.

Thus, the message of Herder, Lessing and Schiller was carried on by the American and the Swedish poet, each in his own way. But whereas Emerson addressed himself chiefly to scholars and wrote in a language which enabled him to gain universal recognition in the realm of philosophy, Tegnér's religious thoughts were directed chiefly to the members of his own church, the common people of Sweden, and were not translated, except insofar as they were a part of his poetic master-pieces, into a European tongue universally recognized or understood. Therefore, Tegnér's influence, as a religious teacher, was far more provincial and his religious genius far less appreciated than was the case with Emerson. Small nations have always suffered the penalty of isolation in the world of culture, and therefore it is to be hoped that this brief comparison of the two poets may help to bring the Swedish genius of Tegnér a little closer to the heart of the American people, whose ideal character Emerson himself typified.

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